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SUBJECT: 63RD UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC  
ISLANDS' PERFORMANCE

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Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF DELAURENTIS FOR REASON  
S 1.4 (B & D)

#### SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION:

11. (U) This cable was prepared by Ambassador Joan Plaisted, who served as Senior Area Adviser for East Asia and the Pacific to the 63rd United Nations General Assembly.

12. (U) To achieve U.S. objectives for the 63rd UN General Assembly (UNGA) session, East Asian and Pacific Islands support was essential. During the General Debate the United States sought to advance priorities on democracy and human rights and on regional issues, including Georgia, Kosovo, Burma, Iran, Sudan/Darfur, and the Middle East, and to demonstrate U.S. leadership on the issues of development and food security. During the remainder of the General Assembly we pressed for other U.S. priorities, such as human rights, UN reform, including reform of the UN Security Council, and improving voting coincidence with the U.S. in the General Assembly. The President of the General Assembly, Miquel d'Escoto Brockmann, a former Sandinista, had his own priorities. These included democratization of the UN (i.e. strengthening the GA vis-a-vis the Security Council) and addressing hunger, poverty, and rising food and oil prices. Dedicating his presidency to "the dispossessed of the world," he cited the "lack of democracy in the UN" as one of the reasons the world is in a "deplorable state" today. He took numerous jabs at the U.S. throughout the session.

13. (U) EAP votes were especially helpful on three Middle East resolutions the United States identified as top priorities. Although these still passed by overwhelming margins, the Pacific Islanders accounted for the majority of the "no" votes with the United States and for many of the abstentions. Voting "no" with the United States and Israel, along with

Canada, were Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau.

14. (SBU) A top U.S. priority this session was to ensure passage of the Iran human rights resolution. First we had to prevent a no-action motion (a motion to adjourn debate that ends all discussion of an issue) from passing in the Third Committee. This motion failed by only one vote in 2007 and two votes in 2006. All out efforts by USUN, Washington, and our Posts ensured the no-action motion on the Iran human rights resolution failed by what the Canadian sponsors termed a "stunning" ten vote margin in the Third Committee. EAP votes also helped defeat a no-action motion on Burma. The Third Committee subsequently passed all three human rights resolutions: on Iran, Burma, and the DPRK. On our top priority, many EAP countries in the Third Committee cast welcome "no" votes with us to defeat the Iran no-action motion: Japan, the ROK, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, and 13 of the 14 Pacific Islands (all except the Solomon Islands). We were able to pick up two more "no" votes when Kiribati got in its proxy and Tuvalu's Permrep reluctantly carried out his good instructions from capital. Kiribati for the first time was able to join all the Third Committee human rights votes. On Burma, two ASEAN countries (Indonesia and the Philippines) abstained on the no-action motion and four (Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) abstained on the human rights resolution in the Third Committee. On the DPRK human rights resolution, the welcome news this year was the ROK's being able to vote "yes" rather than abstaining. Third Committee items are expected to come up in the Plenary for a

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vote on December 18; we again need active lobbying efforts by posts.

15. (C) The votes of Pacific Islanders, which now number 14 counting Australia and New Zealand, can no longer be taken for granted. While not exactly a voting bloc, the islands are an influential group whose votes are increasingly solicited by others. The U.S. is not always seen as supportive on the issues of most importance to them: climate change and sustainable development. Some island Permreps are being actively courted by Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba, among others, and may be influenced by who can give them assistance. One Permrep put it most colorfully, speaking about both the Pacific Islands and the Africans, "we are here to get the goodies." Tuvalu's Permrep, when the Senior Advisor asked if he considered principles in his human rights votes, replied, "of course, but in reality, as a small island country, we need assistance."

16. (C) Looking ahead, Japan will replace Indonesia on the Security Council (SC) in 2009-2010, after crushing Iran which only received 32 votes to Japan's 158 in the SC election for the Asian seat. Japan, having only announced its candidacy in January 2007, lobbied aggressively to be certain to win on the first ballot. Vietnam has one more year to serve (then Lebanon hopes to win this seat). The issue of SC enlargement will again prove difficult to resolve. China to date remains non-supportive of Japan's permanent membership. Japan, along with Brazil, Germany, and India, has been pushing the UN to begin serious intergovernmental negotiations. The Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), where the ROK has been an outspoken delegation, has opposed a timeline for intergovernmental negotiations. In a hard-fought compromise that the GA President tried to overturn, the OEWG is to focus on the framework and modalities for the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations that are finally to begin in February 2009 after consultations (December 5, 2008 through January 2009).

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General Debate  
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17. (U) East Asia and Pacific countries in their speeches during the General Debate when almost all of the 192 member

states addressed the General Assembly discussed the deleterious impact of the global food, energy, and financial crises on their economies. Many called for deeper regional integration as a means to temper the turbulence in global financial markets. Australia offered details on just how to fix it. China attributed its development success to the result of reforms and the opening up of its economy - trends it pledged to continue. Burma claimed that the sooner unjust sanctions are revoked, the sooner their country would be in a position to become the region's rice bowl and a reliable energy source. Singapore proclaimed the UN's objective should be to promote effective government rather than democracy to foster national development. Japan and Australia reiterated calls for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. They were joined by others from the region in focusing on the need to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Japan, the ROK, Australia, and Cambodia were among the countries calling on the DPRK to uphold its commitments and to continue to pursue progress through the Six-Party Talks. The DPRK lashed out against the United States as "the worst peace breaker and human rights violator in the world" and blamed the ROK and Japan for failing to redress historical grievances.

18. (U) Pacific island nations appealed for countries to

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redouble efforts to address climate change and rising sea levels, which they maintained threaten the security of their people, and sought support for a General Assembly resolution on "Security and Climate Change" calling for SC review. (Their draft resolution is still being discussed in informal consultations). Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu called for environmental vulnerability to be the key factor to take into account for least developed country graduation status. Fiji announced it was unable to schedule elections in early 2009 as earlier anticipated. Common themes throughout many of the speeches were climate change, the environment, counterterrorism, Millennium Development Goals, financing for development, trade and debt reform, disarmament, human rights, and management and SC reform.

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Middle East Issues  
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19. (U) EAP countries were helpful in adding to the "no" votes and abstentions on three priority resolutions opposed by the United States that extend the mandates of anti-Israeli UN programs established more than a generation ago. These programs contribute neither to the achievement of peace in the region nor to the goal of UN reform. The State Department, under PL 106-113 (Section 721), is required to report by January 15 each year on steps taken to abolish certain UN groups, including these three programs.

110. (U) In an unsuccessful attempt to end the mandate of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, the Plenary vote was 94 for-8(U.S.)against-73 abstain. Last year the vote was 93-8(U.S.)-74. Voting "no" with the U.S. and Israel were Australia, Canada, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau. Tuvalu, with its erratic Permrep, switched to a "yes" vote, after abstaining last year, and voting "no" with us in 2005 and 2006. It would be interesting to know if he was operating on instructions from his capital. The Philippines and Thailand again broke ranks with ASEAN to abstain. Also abstaining were Fiji, Japan, the ROK, Mongolia, New Zealand, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Tonga. Absent were Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu (whose Deputy the Senior Advisor was able to get to come to the vote only to be too confused to vote).

111. (U) An attempt to end the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat failed by a vote of 106-8(U.S.)-57. Last year the vote was 110-8(U.S.)-54. Again joining the U.S., Israel, Canada, and Australia in voting "no" were our

traditional small island friends - the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau. We picked up two abstentions when Fiji switched from an unhelpful "yes" vote and PNG switched from being not present last year to abstaining this year. PNG had earlier abstained from 2004 to 2006. Alas, we saw two additional "yes" votes this year cast by the Solomon Islands whose Permrep had abstained last year and by Timor-Leste who had been not present last year. Tonga was able to abstain for the third year. The ROK and Thailand helpfully maintained their abstentions. (In 2003 they both shifted to abstaining from voting "yes"). Also abstaining were Japan, New Zealand, and Samoa. Kiribati, Mongolia, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu were absent.

¶12. (U) We also sought unsuccessfully (107-8(U.S.))-57) to discontinue the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Last year the vote was 109-8(U.S.))-55. The votes were the same, reflecting the same shifts, as for the Division for Palestinian Rights. Voting "no" were Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru,

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and Palau. Abstaining were Fiji, Japan, ROK, New Zealand, PNG, Samoa, Thailand, and Tonga. Absent were Kiribati, Mongolia, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. All other EAP countries voted "yes."

¶13. (SBU) Next year EAP should try to obtain more "no" votes from the islanders, including Samoa and Tonga. We

should seek to get Vanuatu to again abstain rather than being not present. PNG, which abstained on two of the resolutions, should be encouraged to abstain on the Special Committee rather than being absent. Timor-Leste should be urged to at least be not present on all three resolutions, rather than joining the "yes" votes on two. (Their Permrep, at the Senior Advisor's request, is already reviewing these votes). The high cost of maintaining these mandates - \$5.5 million for FY 2006-2007 for the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat - is a good point to emphasize.

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Human Rights Resolutions  
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¶14. (U) EAP posts efforts paid off when the three top priority resolutions on the human rights situations in Iran, Burma, and the DPRK were adopted by the Third Committee. These resolutions still have to be voted on in the Plenary, a vote now expected December 18. Persistent outreach by USUN, Washington, and our Ambassadors and embassy staff helped us to achieve a 10-vote winning margin on the most critical and close of these votes, the Iran no-action motion. Given that the Iran no-action motion failed by only one vote in 2007 and two votes in 2006, this year's vote tally showed a very concerted and successful effort to change the trend lines. The no-action motions called by Iran and Burma had to be overcome as part of the arduous process of winning the resolution votes. The no-action motion on Iran failed (71-81(U.S.))-28, while the resolution itself was adopted 70(U.S.))-51-60. The no-action motion on Burma lost by a wide margin (54-90(U.S.))-34, while the actual resolution won by an even larger margin (89-(U.S.))-29-63). The DPRK resolution passed with a vote of 95(U.S.))-24-62. How EAP countries voted is outlined in detail below:

¶15. (SBU) Iran no action motion: 71-81(U.S.))-28. Last year's Third Committee vote was 78-79(U.S.))-24. The Canadians, as the resolution's sponsor, said they were "stunned" by the ten-vote margin this year. The U.S. co-sponsored. We picked up two additional EAP "no" votes in Kiribati and Tuvalu. Kiribati was not present and Tuvalu had

abstained in the Third Committee last year. PNG maintained its good "no" vote, having switched from abstaining in 2006. All Pacific Islands voted no with us, except for the Solomon Islands that shifted from abstaining in the Third Committee last year to voting "yes" this year, a vote cast by their maverick Permrep in spite of the Prime Minister's assurances that the Solomon Islands would abstain on all votes. All ASEANS voted "yes."

Yes: Brunei, Cambodia, China, DPRK, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Vietnam.

No: Australia, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, PNG, ROK,

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Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

¶16. (SBU) Iran human rights resolution: 70(U.S.)-51-60. Last year's Third Committee vote was 72(U.S.)-50-55. We picked up an additional "yes" vote when Kiribati cast a proxy vote after being absent in the Third Committee last year. A last-minute intervention by our Ambassador in Timor-Leste, after their Permrep tipped off the Senior Advisor of their plans to abstain, enabled Timor-Leste to vote "yes."

Yes: Australia, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

No: China, DPRK, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam.

Abstain: Brunei, Laos, Mongolia, PNG, Philippines, ROK, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand.

Absent: Cambodia.

¶17. (U) Burma no action motion: 54-90(U.S.)-34. Last year's Third Committee vote was 54-88(U.S.)-34. In the Third Committee this year we picked up two "no" votes from Kiribati (from their being not present last year) and Tuvalu (that abstained last year). Micronesia and Nauru were unusually absent, but both delegations have assured us they will vote "no" with us in the plenary. Indonesia abstained rather than voting "no" as they did last year to show their disgust with Burma's regime for murdering peaceful protesters. The Philippines maintained an abstention, but Singapore returned to their traditional "yes" vote, after abstaining last year. The Solomon Islands voted "yes", having abstained in the Third Committee in 2007.

Yes: Brunei, Cambodia, China, DPRK, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Vietnam.

No: Australia, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau, PNG, ROK, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

Abstain: Indonesia, Philippines.

Absent: Micronesia, Nauru.

¶18. (U) Burma human rights resolution: 89(U.S.)-29-63. Last year's Third Committee vote was 88(U.S.)-24-66. Because this resolution has budgetary implications, it can come up for a vote very late in the Plenary when some small countries are absent. It was EU-sponsored and the United States again co-sponsored. The resolution strongly calls on the government of Myanmar to release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. It also calls on the government of Myanmar to permit all political representatives and representatives of ethnic nationalities to participate fully in the political transition process without restrictions and to resume, without further delay, a dialogue with all political actors, including the NLD and representatives of



ethnic nationalities. The resolution extends the Secretary General's mandate by requesting the SG "to continue to provide his good offices" and to give all necessary assistance to enable his Special Advisor and the Special Rapporteur to discharge their mandates fully and effectively and in a coordinated manner. We picked up four "yes" votes: Fiji (from abstain), Kiribati (from not present), Samoa (from abstain), and Tonga (from not present). Micronesia was absent, but their delegate plans to vote "yes" in the plenary. Brunei shifted to a "no" vote, having abstained

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last year.

Yes: Australia, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, ROK, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

No: Brunei, China, DPRK, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam.

Abstain: Indonesia, PNG, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand.

Absent: Cambodia, Micronesia.

119. (U) DPRK human rights resolution: 95(U.S.)-24-62. Last year's Third Committee vote was 97(U.S.)-23-60. This was the fourth time the UNGA has passed a human rights resolution on the DPRK. It was EU-sponsored, the United States cosponsored. The resolution expresses very serious concern at the persistence of continuing reports of systemic, widespread and grave violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the continued refusal to recognize the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK. The welcome news this year was the ROK being able to vote "yes", rather than abstaining. Kiribati added another "yes" vote, having been not present last year. However, we lost two "yes" votes from last year when Cambodia and the Philippines switched to abstaining this year.

Yes: Australia, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, PNG, ROK, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

No: China, DPRK, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam.

Abstain: Brunei, Cambodia, Philippines, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand.

Absent: Mongolia.

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Defamation of Religions  
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120. (U) Another Third Committee priority was to ensure broad cross-regional opposition to the Egyptian-sponsored defamation resolution. The resolution seeks to impose limitations on freedom of expression that run contrary to U.S. and international law. While the resolution passed in the Third Committee by a vote of 85-50(U.S.)-42, we were pleased to see the combined "no" votes and abstentions outnumbered the "yes" votes. Voting yes were Brunei, Cambodia, China, DPRK, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Voting no with the U.S. were Australia, Micronesia, New Zealand, Palau, ROK, and Samoa. Abstaining were Japan, Mongolia, Nauru, PNG, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu. Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu were absent. This vote will come up again in the Plenary.

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U.S. Resolution on Compliance  
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¶21. (U) The U.S. triennial resolution on "Compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments" passed in the Plenary by an overwhelming vote of 158(U.S.)-0-18. The resolution stresses the

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importance of compliance with these agreements and calls on states to hold accountable those states not in compliance with their nonproliferation and arms control treaty obligations. This year the resolution was updated to acknowledge the importance of building effective national, regional and international verification, compliance, and enforcement capacities, and to call upon member states to assist governments, as appropriate, to increase their capacity to implement fully their verification and compliance obligations. The resolution obtained support this year from Indonesia, while China and the DPRK once again did not participate in the vote. Fifty-seven countries co-sponsored.

EAP co-sponsors were Australia, Fiji, Japan, Palau, and Timor-Leste.

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Bloc Politics and EAP Country Performance  
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¶22. (SBU) ASEAN countries sometimes went their own ways this UNGA, as seen in their diverse votes on the Burma no-action motion in the Third Committee and the Burma and Iranian human rights resolutions. The Philippines and Thailand again split off to abstain on some Middle East issues this session. Thailand took over the ASEAN Chair from Singapore. Cuba took over from Malaysia in 2006 as the NAM coordinator, making NAM decisions more likely to go against US interests.

¶23. (C) As in past years, Pacific Island Forum (PIF) countries consult regularly on UN issues. Tonga serves as the Pacific Island Forum chair. Counting Australia and New Zealand, the Pacific Islands now number 14, with the addition of Tuvalu as a member in 2000 and Kiribati, Nauru, and Tonga in 1999. While not exactly a voting bloc, the islands are an influential group whose votes are increasingly solicited by others. The United States can not take these votes for granted when we seek support on human rights, Middle East, and other issues. Even our normally solid supporter, the Marshall Islands, switched to abstaining rather than voting "no" with the U.S., Israel, and Palau on the resolution calling for an end to the Cuban embargo. (The RMI President later expressed displeasure with his Permrep's vote). The most important issues to the islands are sustainable development and climate change, where the US is not always viewed as supportive. Iran, for example, lobbied aggressively on human rights and Middle East issues. In pursuit of SC votes, both Iceland and Austria sent envoys to the South Pacific. Turkey invited the Pacific Islanders to a summit.

¶24. (C) Increasingly the Senior Advisor is noting a "what's in it for me or my country" attitude. The Micronesian permrep put it colorfully, referring to both the Pacific Islanders and the Africans, "we are here to get the goodies."

He maintained this is particularly important for Permreps who are also accredited to Washington (Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu). The Solomon Island's Permrep arranged for his Foreign Minister to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with his Iranian counterpart during the General Debate in September and the Minister later visited Iran. This explains in part the Permrep's tenacity in his votes on the human rights resolution. Venezuela and Cuba court the islanders too. Several countries have medical students studying in Havana: Nauru, the Solomon Islands, and Kiribati, with Tuvalu working on a future program. Tuvalu's Permrep told the Senior Advisor that he votes for whoever can assist Tuvalu: if you can help us on this project, we will vote for you. "We are here bilaterally to seek assistance," he maintained. In a likely reference to Iran, he added that

some countries did not honor their commitment and Tuvalu would not vote for them again. Asked by the Senior Advisor if he considered principles regarding the human rights votes, he replied, "of course, but in reality, as a small island country, we need assistance."

¶25. (C) The best way to get island votes, in addition to providing assistance, is to spend time with these small delegations and to provide written talking points for them to share with their capitals, when needed. Most regular contact in New York ends after the Senior Advisor departs. The islanders have appreciated lunches hosted by the Senior Advisor and sometimes by the U.S. Permrep and the session EAP A/S Christopher Hill held in September with their heads of delegation to the General Debate. It has been helpful to have Palau's Permrep, who almost always votes with the U.S. in New York and not to have to pursue a proxy. Kiribati, due to cost, is now the only Pacific island without a UN Mission in New York, although their President participated in September's General Debate. For the first time Kiribati, which traditionally grants its proxy to New Zealand, arranged a proxy vote for the SC elections and all the human rights resolutions in the Third Committee. We hope Kiribati's increased participation will continue. One has to start well in advance to line this up. The Solomon Islands is often the odd island out on human rights and other votes. Tuvalu's Permrep also bears watching. Vanuatu should be able to participate in more votes. For many of the islands with small missions, just showing up for a vote is a major feat. Some made effective use of interns to supplement their small delegations. Taiwan has managed to get into the UN via the back door, placing interns in a few delegations including the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Palau.

¶26. (SBU) Because almost all of developing Asia is organized in one regional group or another, Mongolia feels left out, belonging to no sub-regional group and believes this impacts its ability to get elected to UN bodies, leading Mongolia to drop its SC seat candidacy for 2009-2010. Mongolia has recently played a more active role as seen in its two resolutions adopted by consensus this UNGA on the "UN literacy decade" and "Mongolia's international security and nuclear weapons free status." Timor-Leste, a fairly recent UN member, is feeling its way on the issues and, without being a member of a group, is amenable to considering questions on their merits. Timor-Leste's Permrep worked with the Senior Advisor and his capital this session to be able to cast laudatory "yes" votes on all the human rights resolutions including Iran and "no" votes against all no action motions. In sum, it is very important to get to know and spend time with the Permreps.

¶27. (C) Japan has performed solidly, if very cautiously, in view of its permanent seat aspirations on the SC and its successful bid for a temporary SC seat for 2009-2010. Japan was elected earlier to a temporary seat for 2009-2010 on the newly created Peacebuilding Commission and will serve as chair until year-end as part of its efforts to be seen as a constructive player. The U.S. and Japan, that together contribute 42 percent of the UN budget, will need to work closely to pursue critical management reforms in the Secretariat and to limit the unrestrained growth of the budget to an acceptable level. Japan can generally be counted on to consider seriously the financial implications of Council decisions, especially those related to the expansion of peacekeeping mandates. Japan's willingness to back U.S. positions was only constrained by its desire to be as inoffensive to as many other delegations on as many issues as possible to obtain maximum support for its overarching

objective: securing a permanent SC seat.



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The Future  
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¶28. (C) Looking ahead, Japan will replace Indonesia on the SC in 2009-2010, after crushing Iran which only received 32 votes to Japan's 158 in the SC election for the Asian seat. Japan, a late entrant in January 2007 with Mongolia withdrawing its candidacy, lobbied aggressively to be certain to win on the first ballot. Japan may have benefited from being seen as a responsible UN member, the head of the Peacebuilding Commission, and the second largest contributor to the UN budget, while Iran is in violation of both Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. This will be the tenth time Japan has served on the SC, the most recent being in 2005-2006. Vietnam has one more year to serve (with Lebanon hoping to replace them). Vietnam's emergence on the world stage has meant having to start taking clearer stands on issues of international peace and security outside the southeast Asian region. Their approach to most issues more closely resembles that of China, rather than the United States; Vietnam's voting coincidence with us in the General Assembly is very low. Australia announced this year (some six years too late, according to their Deputy Permrep) its quest for a non-permanent SC seat in 2013-2014. Three WEOG candidates (Luxembourg, Finland, and Australia) are competing for two WEOG seats.

¶29. (C) The issue of SC enlargement will again prove difficult to resolve, although the President of the General Assembly is trying to spur negotiations. The Open-ended Working Group is to focus on the framework and modalities for the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations that are to begin not later than February 28, 2009. Japan's prime minister has reached out more to China and has refrained from visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. China to date remains non-supportive of Japan's permanent membership. The ROK had earlier signaled its opposition to new SC permanent members. The United States emphasizes that any reform of the SC must be undertaken for the ultimate purpose of increasing the effectiveness of the UN system. A comprehensive package of reforms must include reforms in other areas such as General Assembly financing and decision-making where the U.S. has yet to see significant movement. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, when he was sworn in as the first Asian Secretary General in 35 years (since U Thant of Burma), promised that his top priority would be to restore trust in a United Nations that has been criticized for corruption and mismanagement and witnessed distrust among members deeply divided over UN reform. His work remains cut out for him.

¶30. (U) The good showing this UNGA by EAP countries - with the Pacific Islands often our best allies in the UN - was attributable to concerted efforts on all fronts: in New York, in Washington, and in capitals. Our embassies in particular deserve our gratitude for their lobbying efforts with host governments, often on short notice.  
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